

Castlemaine Naturalist

August 2017

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Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



Flame Heath - photo Geraldine Harris

The July Excursion

Richard Piesse

The club Excursion on 15th of July was to the Red, White and Blue track in the Muckleford Forest and the Tatt Town track in the Smith's Reef forest.

We visited five of Ern's quadrats astride the RWB track. The forest is much healthier than when the quadrats were last surveyed approximately four years ago – most of the Eucalypts had healthy crowns, totally different to their previously very stressed state.

Last year's winter/early spring rains and this April's downpour have ensured very healthy seedlings appearing in great numbers.

We were fortunate to have David Cheal on the outing, and his extraordinary botanical knowledge helped us read the forest “through different eyes”. He also confirmed no sign of Flame Heath seedlings in the burn quadrat along Tatt Town Track.

Plants in flower identified (including both locations) were:

Acacia aspera
genistifolia
gunni
pycnantha
Astroloma conostephioides
Pterostylis smaragdina
Grevillea alpina
Hakea decurrens
Daviesia ulicifolia

Rough Wattle
Spreading Wattle
Ploughshare Wattle
Golden Wattle
Flame Heath
Emerald-lip Greenhood
Downy Grevillea
Bushy Needlewood
Gorse Bitter-pea

July excursion photos by Geraldine Harris



Above left: bush along the RWB track



above: Rough Wattle *Acacia aspera*

Below: Emerald-lip Greenhood *Pterostylis smaragdina*



Close-up below shows the internal flanges touching and the green labellum.



Nature Notes for August - Queries from Readers

i.e. Readers of "Wildlife" magazine, August 1941

George Broadway

Just think that the war had been raging in Europe for two years, but Japan had not yet entered. There was no mention of the war in "Wildlife" Magazine. Readers were still collecting and asking about specimens, like:-

Spiders and Scorpions

Moorabbin: Melbourne Trapdoor Spider. (Previously mentioned). "A nasty-looking beast" No records of a dangerous bite.

Donald: Bird-dropping Spider (again, keeps cropping up). Harmless, its only defence method is camouflage as a piece of bird poo.

Also Ivanhoe, Narracoorte, Glen Iris and Kensington, and one from "no address".

Ouyen: Mallee Mouse Spider (female) *Eriodon occatorium*. Again has not been convicted of a dangerous bite, although it is a Trapdoor Spider and looks pretty formidable. Another specimen which is constantly sent in.

Prahran, Kew: Scorpions. One of the largest Mr Morrison had seen from Victoria, almost 3 inches (75 mm) long, but still not large enough to give a dangerous sting.

Mitcham: Pseudo-scorpion or "book scorpion". Have a structure similar to a true scorpion, but lack the tail and the sting. Often found on flying insects but is doubtful whether they are parasites or merely hitching a lift.

There is an excellent article on scorpions and pseudo-scorpions in the July edition of the "Geelong Naturalist" written by Valda Dedman.

Insects

Colinroobie (NSW): Ghost Moth, *Trictena argentata*. One of the Family Hepialidae. Has no common name (11941)

On looking this up I found that *argentata* is now *atripalpis* and the common name is Bardi Ghost Moth. The grubs are called Bardi grubs by fishermen although the same name is also given to the larvae of a beetle.

Geelong W. : Grey Cockroach, a native type found among decaying timber and under bark.

Ballarat E. and Hamilton: Baby casemoth. Probably brought into the house with flowers or leaves. When it grows a little larger it will start to weave sticks and leaves into its case. The female is wingless and never leaves the case, laying her eggs within. The young emerge like little dunces caps. (See notes last month)

Kew, Castlemaine and Wonjip: Chrysalis of Cabbage White Butterfly.

Richmond: Ichneumon Flies. Not a fly but a type of wasp with four wings unlike a fly which has two wings. The "sting" at the back is an ovipositor,

used for injecting eggs into caterpillars which are then hosts for the parasitic larvae, thus keeping pests in check.

Often attracted into houses at night by lights.

E.Preston: A wingless cockroach.

Seaford: Hairy caterpillar with black tufts, Larva of the Painted Apple Moth, a destructive insect. Recommends spraying with Arsenate of lead.

Cranbourne: A Moth with wings like a piece of tapestry. One of the Ghost Moths.

Ararat: Caterpillar of the Convolvulus Hawk Moth, *Agrius convolvuli*. Hawk moths have long narrow fore-wings and stocky smooth bodies.

They are strong swift fliers and some can hover while they use the long tongue to feed on nectar.

Dimboola, Yea, Horsham and Geelong W.: - All samples of the Tree Cricket, *Paragryllacris*.. These seem to pop up nearly every month.

Again, see earlier edition of Newsletter.

Glen Waverley: Cannibal Beetles with grey and black overcoat and bright yellow feelers which are always waving busily. Has no common name but scientific name is *Trogodendron*, and its food is other insects including beetles. Not poisonous but the sharp strong jaws can chew anything and are capable of inflicting a nasty bite.

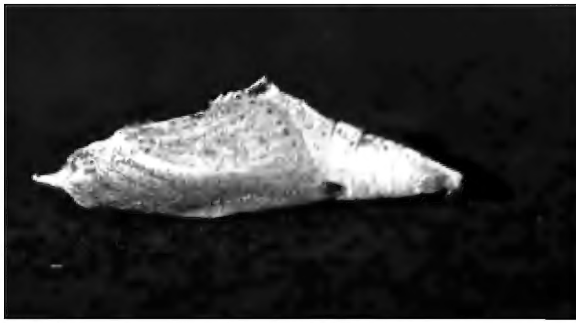
Fungi

W.Preston: Ox-blood toadstool, *Cortinarius sanguineus*. There are over 500 different Cortinars in the world, most of them brightly coloured. None are recommended for eating. Is not a close relative of the Fly Agaric, brilliant scarlet with white spots. I suspect however that it has been reclassified as a *Dermocybe*. *Cortinarius sanguineus* does not seem to appear in recent fungi books.

Tarranyurk: One of the largest “vegetable caterpillars” ever seen. It was a caterpillar of the large Ghost Moth, but had been taken over by a fungus *Cordyceps gunnii*. The spore infects the caterpillar, grows and fills the skin of the caterpillar. At maturity it puts up above ground a stem with a fruiting body on top.

Caulfield: Two specimens found in Sherbrooke Forest. Violet brightfoot, *Leptonia lampropus*, and Goblet Fungus, *Hygrophorus* ssp.

There is a *Hygrophorus* in Bruce Fuhrers’s book, but it does not appear to deserve the name “Goblet”. I am unable to find any *Leptonia* in any of my Fungi books, but there have been many name changes since 1941. (Thanks to Mr Google I found that *Leptonia* is now regarded as a subspecies of *Entoloma*, and *E. lampropus* is also known as Brightfoot Pinkgill)



Cabbage Butterfly Pupa



Squilla mantis



Dermocybe sanguineus



Apple Moth - Ag. Dept. 1891



Bardi Ghost Moth: Moths of Victoria



Book Scorpion



Ichneumon wasp

Plants

Doris St, wherever? The flower is an old-fashioned garden flower known as Statice, now becoming popular again after many years.

Wesburn: Your plant is a wattle known as "Prickly Moses", which is probably derived from prickly Mimosa, Mimosa being a European plant with flowers similar to a wattle.

Miscellaneous

Caulfield: The eggs in Mallee root crevices were gecko eggs. Unlike most lizards, Geckos have brittle shells.

Geelong, and also Sorrento: Mantis shrimp, *Squilla mantis*. A crustacean and a close relative to crabs and crayfish. Has front limbs similar to a Preying Mantis, hence the common name. If my memory serves me correctly, (it may not), when underwater listening devices were developed during World War II, operators were puzzled by strange clicking noises they heard. These turned out to be Mantis Shrimps clicking their pincers. Tons of these “shrimps” are caught and sold in Mediterranean markets. In Italy they are sold as “Sea Grasshoppers”.

Burwood: Millipedes. As vegetarians they can be destructive in the garden.

Malvern: Black aphid on Chrysanthemum. Recommended to spray with Nicotine sulfate.

Tiny Turret Snail *Helicella* which has become in some gardens a greater nuisance than the common snail. I remember these being an annoying pest in my father's garden in Warrnambool, but I have not seen any since moving to Mildura, and then to Castlemaine.

Our Guest Speaker for the August meeting

Emily Noble

“Orchids in the Bush”

Emily Noble, a self-confessed 'orchid nut', will tell us about our terrestrial orchids, accompanied by some of her beautiful photographs of them.

Emily is a professional horticulturalist, the business manager of the Ballarat Environment Network, and secretary of the Ballarat Field Naturalists Club. She and her husband are building a stone home for themselves on a 16 hectare bush block south west of Ballarat. She described the process of caring for the orchids there in her first-prize winning essay: *Orchid Conservation at Home*. This won the inaugural essay competition of the Australian Orchid Foundation in 2012. She has now, by 2017, identified forty-nine different species of terrestrial orchid on their block.

The essay can be perused on the Australian Orchid Foundation website, under Essay Prize or go directly to: <http://www.australianorchidfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Essays/2012/1st-Prize-Orchid-Conservation-at-Home-Emily-Noble.pdf>

Bird Quiz

Nigel Harland

The bird featured last month was the Grey Shrike-thrush. This particular specimen nested in a hanging basket just outside our bedroom window. It successfully raised three chicks, but unfortunately our resident Australian Ravens found them before they had fledged. Not to be outdone, next year the Shrike-thrush nested in a church pew on the other side of the house and successfully raised two chicks! I think the call of the Grey Shrike-thrush is the most charismatic of the birds in our district.

The bird for next month is shown.



Flora database on line

As of August 1st, Ern Perkins' wonderful database of the flowers and plants that occur in the Mt. Alexander Shire has been made freely available on the internet.

A link to it is now on the CFNC website under "flora". Or check it out at

<https://www.castlemaineflora.org.au>

Updates and corrections will be carried out by CFNC as necessary

Observations

July meeting:

- ◆ Reports of lots of early nesting activity in a variety of birds
- ◆ Geraldine – 38 Red-rumped Parrots in the grass at home
- ◆ Richard – At Kalimna, Hakea, Grevilleas, Spreading Wattle, Golden Wattle and Rough Wattle are in flower, plus hundreds of Nodding Greenhood rosettes
- ◆ George – at Kaweka, Three or four Ploughshare Wattle plants in bud and starting to flower, one Waxflower bush in full bloom, others still in bud
- ◆ Chris T – passing the Western reserve after dark noted Grey headed Flying Foxes. These would have flown down from their day roost in Rosalind Park, Bendigo

Richard, 20/7: approx. 25 Emerald lip Greenhoods in Kalimna Park, and a Sharp Midge-orchid *Corunastylis despectans* at Kalimna Point.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists

Coming events

Fri August 11 meeting: speaker EMILY NOBLE – Orchids in the bush

Sat August 12 field trip: Orchid locations Kalimna

Sat August 19 Roadside clean-up: 9am start at cnr. Golf Links rd. on Pyrenees Highway – organiser Geoff Harris

Takes 1 – 2 hrs., Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Garbage bags and reflective vests will be supplied. Please note KABC rules prohibit anyone under 16 from working on the roadside.

Fri September 8 meeting: speaker Zoe Thompson – grassy ecosystems

Wed September 13 – “Wildflower Wanders” commence (4 pm.)

Fri October 13 meeting: speaker Robyn Davidson

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Chris Timewell) - <http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/>

Subscriptions for 2017

Ordinary membership: Single \$30, Family \$40

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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